

Weekly News



ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS 2013



Director of ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division and Chief Economist Abdallah AIDardari, said that the economic situation of the Arab region can be characterized by its polarizing economic performance between major energy exporters and other Arab countries. Major energy exporters, mainly of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, have registered a stable growth with constantly growing domestic demand through active fiscal policy. On the other hand, political instability and social unrest clouded economic situation of other Arab countries, namely Mashreq, Maghreb and Arab Least Developed Countries.

AIDardari was speaking at a press conference he held on 17 January 2013 to launch a UN flagship annual report, "The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013 (WESP)," ESCWA headquarters, Beirut. "GDP growth in Western Asia region declined from 6.7 per cent in

2011 to 3.3 per cent in 2012, and it is forecast to stagnate in 2013 before picking up to 4.1 per cent in 2014," he said.

Produced at the beginning of every year by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations regional commissions, the UN report said most oil-exporting countries benefitted from record-high oil prices and rising oil output in 2012, especially Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Public and private investments bolstered growth in Qatar. Economic activity grew more modestly in Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Political instability delayed any possible recovery in Yemen and degenerated into civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic, weighing on risk perception in the entire region. Neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon were further affected by subdued cross-border economic activities,

including trade, investment and tourism.

AIDardari also discussed the economic situation in Syria, as well as unemployment in the region. He said that the Syrian conflict inflicted significant economic damage, including the destruction of commercial and residential properties, infrastructures and production facilities. Economic sanctions also negatively impacted the Syrian economy. The oil embargo caused an export revenue loss of about \$4 billion, cutting government revenue by around 25 per cent in 2012.

Social unrest associated with the Arab Spring surged in part because of the weak absorption capacity of labour markets across the region, which generates unemployment, underemployment and vulnerable employment. Relatively low official unemployment rates disguise the true extent of underutilization of labour because of low participation rates, especially among women.

E-TRANSACTIONS AND PERSONAL DATA



In cooperation with ESCWA, the Lebanese Presidency of the Council of Ministers organized a seminar on "The Draft Law on E-transactions and Personal Data and the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives," on Thursday 17 January 2013 at the Grand Serail, Beirut. The Seminar was held on the occasion of the adoption of the draft law on E-transactions and Personal Data by the Council of Ministers in its Decree 9341, dated 17 November 2012, and its submission to the Parliament for adoption.

The Seminar opened with a statement by Advisor for Economic Affairs and Development to the Prime Minister Samir Daher, who laid out the Seminar's goals and the background of the Lebanese Draft E-transactions law. The first session was on the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives, which helped in shaping the Lebanese draft law. Director of ESCWA Information and Communication Technology Division Haidar Fraihat highlighted in his statement the importance of harmonizing cyber legislation in the Arab region to ensure regional integration and build a knowledge society. Also participating in the Session were Chief, Information and Communication Technology Applications Section, Nibal Edlebi and Information Technology Officer, Mirna Barbar.

The remaining sessions of the Seminar tackled the draft law in detail, as explained by Head of the IT Unit at the Ministry of Justice Wassim Hajjar. The Session covered three main axes: Authentication, e-signature and e-contracts; Personal data protection; and Cyber crimes.

The Seminar was attended by several Members of concerned Parliamentary Committees, such as Administration and Justice, Media and Communications, and Information Technology (IT), in addition to judges, lawyers, IT experts, and people concerned with law in the public and private sectors, the civil society, and representatives from ESCWA.

NEW RELEASES

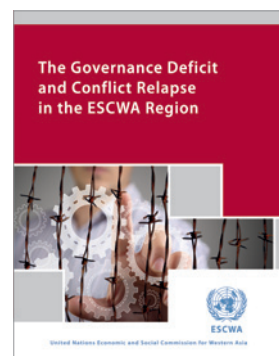
TRENDS AND IMPACTS IN CONFLICT SETTINGS: CONFLICT AND MDGS

This study explores the relationship between conflict and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reviews the status of MDG attainment in conflict-affected countries in the ESCWA region, namely Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen, and assesses the development costs of conflict. The study presents arguments for "pro-MDG" budgets in conflict or fragile countries despite significant financial constraints and competing interests, including the need to ensure security.



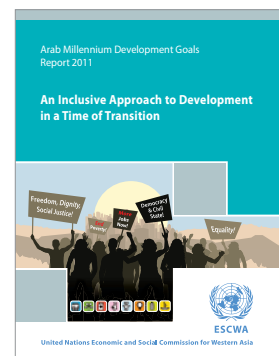
THE GOVERNANCE DEFICIT AND CONFLICT RELAPSE IN THE ESCWA REGION

This study examines a series of mutually reinforcing, interacting variables, which shape the driving forces of the governance deficit, forming a vicious cycle of governance deficit, conflict relapse, and de-development. The links between development, governance and conflict are examined through two proxy indicators: infant mortality and education. Among the findings of the study are positive correlations between levels of repression and the risk of conflict onset, and between conflict in the region and conflict risk.



ARAB MDGS REPORT 2011: AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

The report critically evaluates progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Arab Region and seeks to provide new ideas, alternatives, and analytical tools to measure progress. The MDGs are discussed within the context of the Arab Spring and the report considers how the uprisings demonstrate that the policies of the past have failed to deliver inclusive development. With this in mind, the report presents an inclusive development approach in a time of transition that focuses on inclusive social and economic policies, as well as an initiative for a regional partnership for development to support the most vulnerable countries in the region.



INTERNATIONAL EVENTS:

BIODIVERSITY (2011 - 2020)



On 22 December 2010, building on the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and the goal of significantly reducing biodiversity loss, the UN General Assembly declared 2011-2020 the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (Resolution 65/161).

This Decade will serve to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and promote its overall vision of living in harmony with nature. Its goal is to mainstream biodiversity at different levels.

The world is now on a path to building a future of living in harmony with nature. In October 2010, in Japan, governments had agreed to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets as the basis for halting and eventually reversing the loss of biodiversity of the planet.

The Aichi Targets are part of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. They include five strategic goals and 20 ambitious yet achievable targets. Their purpose is to inspire broad-based action in support of biodiversity over this decade (2011-2020) by all countries and stakeholders promoting the coherent and effective implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.